

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
DHA-02 SCA-01 CU-02 EB-07 COME-00 AID-05 IGA-02
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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 4860

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PDIP, PGOV, ES, US
SUBJECT: CALL ON PRESIDENT ROMERO

1. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY ARA RIVUHARD ARELLANO, ACCOMPANIED BY CHANGE, CALLED ON PRESIDENT ROMERO THIS AFTERNOON (JULY 12). ARELLANO DELIVERED A MESSAGE ON POINTS OF CONCERN IN US RELATIONS WITH EL SALVADOR. THREE SPECIFIC POINTS WERE MADE: (A) MOUNTING CONCERN IN THE US, IN GOVERNMENT AND MONG CHURCH AND HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIIONS, OVER THREAT OF THE WHITE WARRIOR UNION IN EL SALVADOR AGAINST JESUITS PRIESTS WHO DID NOT LEAVE COUNTRY WITH 30 DAYS, AND SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT FAILURE TO REACT SPECIFICALLY TO THAT THREAT. ARELLANO EMPHASIZED THE CONCERN FELT FOR THE LIVES AND SAFETY OF THESE PRIESTS; (B) THE CASE OF AMERICAN CITIZEN, RONALD JAMES RICHARDSON, AND THE FACT THAT THERE STILL HAD BEEN NO RESPONSE FROM SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT OVER THE SUPPOSED DEATH OF RICHARDSON AT THE HANDS OF SALVADORAN AUTHORITIES; (C) THE PROBLEM OF NOTIFICATION TO DETAINED OR ARRESTED AMERICAN CITIZENS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VIENNA CONVENTION ON CONSULAR RELATIONS, OF THEIR RIGHT TO COMMUNICATE WITH THEIR CONSULAR POST.

2. PRESIDENT ROMERO IN RESPONSE TO FIRST POINT GAVE AN EX-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TENSIVE REVIEW OF HISTORY OF RECENT SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT RELATIONS WITH CHURCH. HE SAID THAT THERE WERE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE CHURCH WHO WERE CRITICAL OF THE MILITARY AND OF THE SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT. HE SAID HE HAD MADE EFFORTS TOWARD RECONCILIATION IN A CONVERSATION WITH THE ARCHBISHOP WHILE HE WAS PRESIDENT-ELECT, AND WITH A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CHURCH SINCE HIS INAUGURATION. HE SAID HE APPEALED TO THEM

TO JOIN WITH THE GOVERNMENT IN EXAMINING CONSCIENCES MUTUALLY, ADMITTING THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALSO MADE ERRORS. HE SHOWED A COPY OF A CATHOLIC SCHOOL NEWSPAPER WHICH HE BELIEVED WAS WRITTEN BY PRIESTS OF THE CHURCH ATTACKING THE MILITARY AND THE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS ALLEGED ABUSES OF THE CHURCH. HE ALSO PRODUCED A CONFIDENTIAL REPORT OF AN INTERNAL MEETING OF THE CLERGY WHERE THE CHURCH LEADERS WERE SAID TO HAVE INDULGED IN A SEVERE POLEMIC AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. HE EXPRESSED HIS BELIEF THAT THERE WERE NO FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE CHURCH AND THAT THEY COULD WORK TOGETHER FRUITFULLY, ESPECIALLY GIVEN THE MUTUALITY OF INTEREST IN THE COUNTRY'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. HE DID NOT BELIEVE IT NECESSARY FOR THE CHURCH TO INDULGE IN POLITICS TO MAKE IS CONTRIBUTION TO THESE COMMON CAUSES.

3. SPECIFICALLY ON THE UGB THREAT AGAINST THE JESUITS, HE INSISTED THAT GOVERNMENT HAD TAKEN MEASURES TO PROTECT THEM AND GAVE ASSURANCES NOTHING WOULD HAPPEN TO THEM. IN ADDITION TO REGULAR PATROLS, THE JESUIT HIGH SCHOOL AT HIS SUGGESTION HAD EMPLOYED PRIVATE GUARDS SINCE GOVERNMENT FORCES IF PLACED FOR PROTECTION WOULD BE BLAMED IN EVENT ANY INCIDENT OCCURRED. HE EMPHASIZED A ROVING PATROL HAD BEEN PLACED FOR INSTANT SURVEILLANCE AT THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY. HE SAID HE HAD GONE OVER THESE MEASURES WITH THE PROVINCIAL HEAD OF JESUITS ORDER WHO WAS SATISFIED THAT ADEQUATE PROTECTION HAD BEEN TAKEN.

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4. ON THE CHURCH COMPLAINT OF EXPULSION OF FOREIGN PRIESTS, HE SAID HE HAD MADE IT KNOWN THAT CHURCH VACANCIES COULD BE FILLED WITH FOREIGN PRIESTS SO LONG AS THE GOVERNMENT WAS ABLE TO CLEAR THEIR NAMES BEFOREHAND. HE ADDED THAT EXPELLED FOREIGN PRIESTS COULD NOT RETURN TO EL SALVADOR, BUT SALVADORANS IN GENERAL INCLUDING PRIESTS WHO VOLUNTARILY WENT INTO EXILE, SUCH AS THE ALAS BROTHERS, COULD RETURN AT ANY TIME.

5. ON RICHARDSON CASE ROMERO MADE LITTLE COMMENT EXCEPT TO SAY THAT HE COULD ASSURE THE US GOVERNMENT THAT AMERICAN CITIZENS WOULD BE SAFE IN EL SALVADOR AND THAT THE GUILTY WOULD BE PUNISHED ACCORDING TO LAW IF ANY INCIDENT CONTRARY TO LAW OCCURRED UNDER HIS ADMINISTRATION. MR. ARELLANO EMPHASIZED THAT WE WERE OBLIGATED TO TAKE A SPECIAL INTEREST IN RICHARDSON IN VIEW OF THE US GOVERNMENT'S BASIC RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PROTECTION OF AMERICAN CITIZENS (ROMERO GAVE NO ASSURANCES OF EARLY RESPONSE OR SOLUTION OF THE CASE.).

6. TIME DID NOT ALLOW FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROBLEM OF CONSULAR ACCESS TO DETAINED OR ARRESTED AMERICAN CITIZENS.

7. PRESIDENT ROMERO EMPHASIZED HIS INTENTIONS DURING HIS

FIVE YEARS ADMINISTRATION TO BRING ABOUT IMPROVEMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF SALVADORAN PEOPLE. HE SAID THE COMMENT HAS BEEN MADE THAT QTE I AM REPRESENTING THE INTERESTS OF CAPITAL UNQTE, ADDING THERE MAY BE SURPRISES IN THIS REGARD. (WE INTERPRETED THIS TO MEAN THAT HE WAS NOT IN ANYONE'S POCKET AND THAT HE WOULD TAKE SPECIFIC MEASURES TOWARD REFORM.). MR. ARELLANO EXMPASIZED THAT THE US WAS NOT QTE AGAINST CAPITAL UNQTE. ROMERO SAID THAT ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS HE HAD TOLD THE WEALTHY OF THE COUNTRY THAT THEY MUST MAKE CONCESSIONS IN ORDER TO BREAK DOWN THE DISPARITIES AMONG THE SALVADORAN PEOPLED. HE PRODUCED A COPY OF HIS INAUGURAL ADDRESS TO SHOW HIS INTENTIONS TO BRING ABOUT REFORM AND DEVELOPMENT AND ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT HE AGREED WITH PRESIDENT CARTER ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND VIOLATIONS OF LAW AND TERRORISM IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GENERAL. PRESIDENT ROMERO SAID IT SEEMED THERE WAS ALWAYS SOMEONE TO SPEAK FOR THE OTHER SIDE AND REFERRED A NUMBER OF TIMES TO AN INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO DISCREDIT EL SALVADOR. MR. ARELLANO AT HIS POINT BROUGHT UP THE PLANNED MEETING OF THE FRASER SUBCOMMITTEE ON 21 JULY, AT WHICH HE TOLD THE PRESIDENT SOME CONSIDERATION MIGHT BE GIVEN TO SENDING SOMEONE FROM EL SALVADOR TO REPRESENT THE OTHER SIDE THAT IS, THE GOVERNMENT'S POINT OF VIEW. HE NODDED AGREEMENT THAT THIS COULD BE USEFUL.

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9. MR. ARELLANO ALSO MENTIONED HIS OWN DISAPPOINTMENT THAT EL SALVADOR AT THE GRENADA MEETING OF THE OAS AND ON OTHER OCCASIONS, APPEARED TO BE SIDING WITH THE SOUTHERN COE ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES. HE EMPHASIZED THAT SUCH A POSITION WAS NOT IN CHARACTER FOR EL SALVADOR AND CAST ITS IMAGE FURTHER INTO A MORE UNFAVORABLE POSTURE. PRESIDENT ROMERO SEEMED TO BE RESPONSIVE BUT EMPHASIED HE WAS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE POSITION TAKEN BY PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION AT GRENADA.

10. UPON QUESTION FROM THE CHARGE, PRESIDENT ROMERO SAID IF ASKED BY ANY PRESS CORRESPONDENT HE WOULD FRANKLY TELL OF THE POSITIVE MEASURES WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAD TAKEN TO

PROTECT THE JESUITS IN THE FACE OF THE THREAT FROM THE UGB. HE SAID IF ANY WISHED TO SEE HIM THEY COULD MAKE APPOINTMENT THROUGH HIS PRESS SECRETARY. (AFTER THE MEETING AN EFFORT WAS MADE TO GET MESSAGE TO DON BOHNING OF THE MIAMI HERALD THAT THERE MIGHT BE A STORY IF HE COULD REACH PRESIDENCY FOR AN APPOINTMENT.)

11. THE MEETING WAS CORDIAL AND FRANK. PRESIDENT ROMERO HEDGED ON THE SUGGESTION FOR A STATEMENT ON THE UGB THREAT WITH HIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RAMBLING DISCOURSE ON RELATIONS WITH THE CHURCH. HE SPOKE OF THE PRESSURES PUT ON THE US GOVERNMENT TO QTE PUT PRESSURES UNQTE ON EL SALVADOR, AND THIS HE SEEMED TO RESIST. THE US APPROACH WAS PHRASED CAREFULLY IN TERMS OF SUGGESTIONS OR QUESTIONS AND NOT PRESSURE, WITHOUT LEAVING IN DOUBT, HOWEVER, THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH THE ISSUES WERE VIEWED. THE MEETING LASTED ONE HOUR AND FIFTEEN MINUTES AND DEMONSTRATED ROMERO'S COURTEOUS INTEREST IN AND ATTENTION TO THE POINTS WE HAD TO PUT ACROSS. IN SPITE OF LACK OF SPECIFIC COMMITMENT WE BELIEVE POSITIVE RESULTS MAY ENSUE.

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